



## Avian Influenza Spreads Throughout Asia, Human Transmission May be Possible

With the death toll now reaching twelve, the bird flu is still a serious public health threat, especially in Thailand and Vietnam, where the deaths have occurred. There are also three confirmed cases and eight suspected cases in China. Public officials are most concerned about the possibility of the first case of human-to-human transmission, in which two sisters recently died after possibly contracting the H5N1 virus from their brother. He died from an unknown respiratory illness but was cremated before tests could be performed.

WHO experts warn that the H5N1 subtype of the avian influenza causes severe disease in humans and can mutate rapidly by mixing with a human influenza strain to create a mutant form that passes easily between people. This could trigger the next human flu pandemic. Infected birds spread the disease by shedding the virus



via saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. When the feces dries and becomes crushed, humans may inadvertently inhale the dust. Symptoms of the disease include high fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches, and low blood pressure. More severe cases report eye infections, pneumonia, acute respiratory distress, and other life-threatening complications. Diagnostic tests and antivirals for humans already exist, although antivirals are costly. So far only two countries have had fatalities resulting from the avian flu, although bird farms in Laos, Pakistan, Japan, South Korea, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Taiwan are known to contain infected birds. This has resulted in the slaughter of at least tens of millions of chickens, ducks, and turkeys. For more up-to-date information on this virus, click on the DoD-GEIS Homepage:

<http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil/>.

## SAFMLS and ICEID Meetings This Month

The Society of Armed Forces Medical Laboratory Scientists will hold their annual meeting on February 23-26 at the Sheraton Boston Hotel in the historic Back Bay area of Boston, Massachusetts. This conference will include presentations of clinical and research topics coupled with scientific discussions concerning the upgrading of laboratory sciences and advancement methodologies. Other focal points of the meeting will include poster sessions, workshops, and vendor exhibitions. This educational meeting will give professionals the opportunity to introduce their ideas and research findings to their peers in the Armed Forces, Public Health Services and Veterans Administration. Registration and other information can be found at <http://www.safmls.org/content2.htm>.

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases will be held at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis in Atlanta, Georgia from February 29 through March 3. This conference will allow public health professionals to exchange scientific and public health information on global emerging infectious disease issues. The program will include plenary and panel sessions with invited speakers as well as oral and poster presentations on emerging infections. Surveillance, epidemiology, research, training, bioterrorism, preventions and control of emerging infectious diseases will be discussed. To find out more about specific topics that will be addressed at this conference, click on the National Center for Infectious Diseases ICEID website at <http://www.cdc.gov/iceid/index.htm>.

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[luongt@afip.osd.mil](mailto:luongt@afip.osd.mil) for your login and password. From there, you'll be able to change your log-in information if desired.